

SMP Workplace Violence Prevention (2023)

This course reviews our best practices for de-escalating extreme behavior in our healthcare settings. Please allow 20-25 minutes to review the content and complete the knowledge checks for each lesson. Thank you.

Agenda

The recognition and response by healthcare workers to workplace violence helps create a safe environment. The primary focus for this module is to provide tools to manage aggressive behaviors in patients, visitors, or workforce members, through:

- **Hazard Identification**
- **Early Recognition**
- **Prevention and De-escalation**
- **Response**
- **Recovery**

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- **Recognize aggressive behaviors in people**
- **Recognize early signs of behavioral escalation**
- **Apply preventive measures and methods**
- **Learn de-escalation techniques to decrease the likelihood and aggression**
- **Describe procedures for response to escalating behavior and behavior emergencies**
- **Describe steps that should be taken following a behavioral event, including debriefing and continuous improvements to prevent future events**



So, what does SMP do about workplace violence prevention?

Stanford Medicine Partners (SMP) and our Medical Groups support, maintain, and provide a safe work environment for clinicians, staff, patients, and visitors. We continue to collaborate on workplace violence prevention, and to have a united response to different situations as they arise.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for acts and threats of violence in the workplace, and Executive and Senior Leadership always stand behind this policy. Employees who engage in violent behavior will be disciplined up to and including termination.

Leadership, employees, clinicians, and staff are all responsible for Workplace Violence Prevention, de-escalation, and response.

SMP's **Patient Behavioral Standards** establishes our clinics as a place of mutual respect. Patients find these standards in their MyHealth application. We hold patients accountable for any acts or threats of violence in our facilities.

Learning about and preventing workplace violence isn't a new concept for our organization. We illustrate how to de-escalate using C-I-Care methods and how to promptly respond to violence in subsequent lessons.

To add to our definitions of workplace violence, consider these additional concepts that link harassment *and* workplace violence.

Workplace Harassment:

This is an act in which a person is harassed, abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted in their employment, and includes such incidents as:

- Rumors, swearing, verbal abuse, and other harassment
- Pranks, property damage, vandalism, and sabotage
- Pushing, physical assaults, anger-related incidents, and other psychological trauma
- Sexual assault, rape, bodily injury, arson, and murder

Anyone, including workforce members, patients, visitors, and vendors, can be the **initiator** of harassment and violence. How we handle these potential situations is essential.

Prevention, early recognition of behaviors, de-escalation techniques, prompt reporting, and response are **vital to** stopping harassment and workplace violence.

Insights from COVID-19

We've learned a lot from the pandemic, right? Maybe most importantly, we have learned more about the human condition and the impact of change to our day-to-day lives and "normal" routines.

Per Dr. Elizabeth Reichert, PhD (Stanford Children's Hospital), we have come to understand that elements such as shelter-in-place, social distancing, personal loss, substantial social and community disruption, lack of day care, school closures, disinformation, mental health concerns, and uncertainty can **trigger** emotions inside us including:

- Fear, anxiety, and concern
- Loneliness, hopelessness, and depression
- Grief, financial stress, and insecurity
- Role change anxiety, relationship challenges, and stress
- Anger, frustration, over-reaction, lack of trust, and other emotions



Additional Stress or Just Too Much Stress?

Sometimes, even the gentlest people can be pushed to their limits if they **don't** get what they need. Add to that any *additional* stressors that disrupt routines, schedules, work, or childcare, and you have the perfect "mix" for escalating behavior.

What Can You Do?

The approach to preventing workplace violence is simple - we build a foundation of trust between us, our patients, and our visitors. **Click** each plus (+) sign to learn how each of the strategies below can help prevent workplace violence or escalating behavior.

PROVIDE STABILITY —

If you're dealing with escalating behavior, it's best to demonstrate being **calm** and **stable**. This will alleviate anxiety and uncertainty in your interactions with the person.

When speaking, be as clear and concise as possible. Consistently provide current, up-to-date information to meet the person's needs.

DEMONSTRATE COMPASSION —

Treat others with respect and dignity - always. Express genuine interest in patients, their care plans, their visitor's questions, and all interactions with your co-workers.

Practice the "**Platinum Rule**" by treating others the way they want to be treated.

ESTABLISH TRUST

Be present and free from distraction when engaging others. Offer a relaxed smile, addressing people by their proper name and pronouns, and confirming readiness before starting a conversation.

INSPIRE HOPE

Express affirmation and validation, **and** a word of thanks.

Do the strategies above look familiar? They should. These are key components of our **C-I-Care** program for interactions with colleagues, patients, and visitors.

Communicate with Empathy: Empathetic Communication Examples

The most effective way to prevent a behavioral escalation is to establish an environment of trust and collaboration.

Three Elements of Empathy

- 1** Read and understand another person's inner experience and perspective.
- 2** Communicate your understanding by acknowledging and validating the person's feelings.
- 3** Have an intention to help, and act on it.

Empathetic communication can reduce patient, visitor, and co-worker anxiety by acknowledging their anxieties, responding with feeling, and making an individual connection.

Examples of empathetic communication:

- "I can see how hard this is for you". "Let's work together to identify some options that might be helpful."
- "I'm really glad you shared this with me, I'll look into this for you."
- "I'm sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I wanted to be sure that I had the correct information."
- "I'm sorry this has been so upsetting. Let me look into it more for you. Together we can figure out a good plan."

Empathetic Communication: Tips for Success

- Adopt an attitude of compassion and suspend judgement and defensiveness.
- Listen, observe, and be curious. This helps you connect and notice the other person's feelings, cues, and reactions.
- In tense situations, take a deep breath before you reply. This will help you remain calm and avoid sounding judgmental or defensive.
- Be authentic and sincere in your communication. Match your posture, tone, and face to your words. People recognize when you are being insincere, and it can exacerbate their frustration.

The Five Levels of Escalation

When someone isn't getting what they need, they can express themselves in a hostile or harassing manner and escalate those behaviors quickly. The initial response to a quick escalation is as follows:

- Clinicians and staff work as a team. Notify the Manager and, together, de-escalate the situation if possible.
- If the incident is life-threatening, call 9-1-1.
- If a person uses a weapon, then Run-Hide-Defend (Fight).

When it safe to do so:

- Call the Stanford Security Operations Center at (650) 723-7222
- Call your Director and SMP Corporate Operations

A person can progress slowly through the Five Levels of Escalation, giving you time to de-escalate.

CONFUSION

Unsure or uncertain of the next course of action. May pace and display tense behavior.



FRUSTRATION

Reaction or resistance. Impatient. Feeling a sense of defeat. Making unwarranted claims of entitlement. Demanding unnecessary service or attention.

BLAME

Accusing, placing responsibility on everyone else. Challenging authority and invading personal space. **Crossing over to hazardous behavior.**

ANGER



Visible change in body posture/disposition. Heavy breathing, pounding fists, pointing fingers, Yelling, using profanity. Making statements about losing control (veiled threats). **This signals very risky behavior.**



HOSTILITY



Physical actions or threats which appear imminent. Acts of physical harm or property damage. **Out-of-control behavior signals they have crossed over the line.**

After an Escalation Event

It's your responsibility to report on **all** incidents of workplace violence - whether the incident involved a patient, a visitor, or a co-worker.

Reporting Options

- Patient Safety Incident.** These types of incidents involve a patient in the course of their care. Midas Safe Reports must be linked to a specific patient encounter and include the patient's Medical Record Number. **NOTE: SAFE** is an acronym which stands for Stanford Alerts for Events. <https://shcconnect.stanfordmed.org/depts/uha/Pages/SAFE-Reporting.aspx>

- Workplace Violence.** If not clinically related, use the SMP Incident intake Form for security, safety, and Environmental Health and Safety incidents. <http://shmidspemap102/MidasWeb/shmidspemap102.Enterprise.stanfordmed.org/MAA/FocusStudy/Framework/FrameMain.aspx?&BrowserID=3>

Both can be found on the SMP SharePoint homepage:

<https://shcconnect.stanfordmed.org/depts/uha/Pages/University-Healthcare-Alliance.aspx>



Summary

Keep submitting safety and security events.

SMP reviews all safety and security events to quickly respond and support all workforce members.

Non-retaliatory inquiries and investigations are completed to continuously improve operations throughout the organization.

The objective is to mitigate and prevent situations early.

If you have any questions about the module, please contact Human Resources via AskHR or email our Director of Corporate Operations, [John Higgenbotham](#), who is our SMP Safety Officer.